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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report has been prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/1 of 12 October 1995. Its purpose is to facilitate a review by the Assembly of the cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

2. A significant development in recent years has been the activation of subregional organizations and the emergence of new subregional groupings to pursue cooperative endeavours among neighbouring countries in order to strengthen the development momentum. The United Nations has remained alert to these developments and has sought to harness the potential offered by these opportunities for the benefit of member States.

3. A case in point is the growing cooperation between ECO and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Given the fact that the 10 States members of ECO are also members of ESCAP and that several of them share common problems as economies in transition, a memorandum of understanding between ECO and ESCAP was signed on 7 July 1993.

4. Under the terms of the memorandum of understanding, ECO and ESCAP agreed to cooperate and collaborate, to the extent possible, on development issues and concerns of mutual interest; to develop and implement, as appropriate, joint projects, including organizing workshops, seminars and meetings on mutually identified areas of priority concern; to exchange analytical reports and technical publications on relevant economic and social development issues; to establish linkages through the exchange of information, documentation and ideas; and to cooperate in providing inputs to their respective technical committees.

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The memorandum of understanding also covers specific fields for collaboration between the two organizations.

5. In the transport sector, ESCAP participated in a meeting of transport ministers of ECO member countries, which was held at Almaty, Kazakstan, in October 1993 and which adopted an outline plan for the development of the transport sector in the ECO region. ESCAP also collaborated with ECO in the implementation of a training seminar on land transport facilitation measures, held at Tehran, in November 1994. Under the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development project, being implemented by ESCAP, three studies involving ECO countries were completed in 1995, on: (a) land transport linkages from Kazakstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to seaports in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Pakistan and to China in the east; (b) development of a highway network in the Central Asian republics; and (c) development of the Trans-Asian Railway in the southern corridor of Asian-European routes.

6. A project has been jointly prepared by ECO and ESCAP for the purpose of undertaking a survey of economic resources to identify opportunities for closer cooperation among the countries members of ECO. Discussions are also under way between ECO and ESCAP on provision of technical assistance in the areas of privatization and private sector development in the Central Asian republics, macro-economic reforms, access of women to formal credit, and increased productivity of the informal sector.

7. A framework for regular dialogue between the two organizations has been established through the Consultative Meetings between the Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations and ESCAP. The third Consultative Meeting is expected to be hosted by the ECO secretariat at Tehran during the first half of 1997.